

REMARKS

This is a full and timely response to the outstanding Office Action mailed October 22, 2003. Reconsideration and allowance of the application and presently pending claims are respectfully requested.

1. Present Status of Patent Application

The Office Action indicates that the Applicants did not comply with the conditions under 35 U.S.C. § 120 for receiving the benefit of an earlier filing date from the parent U.S. patent application. In addition, the Office Action rejected all claims (19 – 28) under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,308,328 to *Bowcutt et al.* (hereinafter *Bowcutt*), which was filed on April 10, 1997.

2. Response To 35 U.S.C. § 120 Priority Claim Issue

Applicants have revised the first sentence of the application. According to 37 C.F.R. 1.78(2)(ii)(B), the priority claim is not subject to the time period limits of 37 C.F.R. 1.78(2)(ii) because the present application was filed on June 6, 2000, which is before the stated date of November 29, 2000. Thus, Applicants submit that the amended present application now is at least entitled to the March 14, 1997 date of the U.S. Patent No. 6,230,203, which is the parent of the present application.

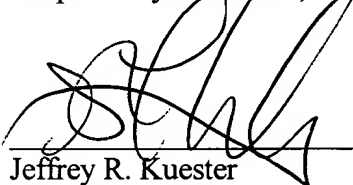
3. Response To Claim Rejections Based Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Independent claim 19 and claims 20 – 28, which depend therefrom, were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly being unpatentable over *Bowcutt*, which has a filing date of April 10, 1997. With the revised claim to priority, the priority date of the present application is at least March 14, 1997, which is before the April 10, 1997 filing date of *Bowcutt*. Thus, *Bowcutt* is no longer a 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) reference against the present application. With the removal of the *Bowcutt* reference, Applicants submit that all pending claims of 19 – 28 are now in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing amendments and for at least the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully submit that all objections and/or rejections have been traversed and that the pending claims of 19 – 28 are in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the present application and all pending claims are hereby courteously requested. If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephonic conference would expedite the examination of this matter, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at (770) 933-9500.

Respectfully submitted,



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